

# **From Language Teacher to Teacher of Languages : Results from a Socrates Project**

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*From Language Teacher to Teacher of Languages*  
aims at offering tools for enhancing plurilingualism  
in the foreign language classroom.

Intercomprehension is a key notion and  
development of language and cultural awareness an ultimate objective.

**Høgskolen i Østfold**

**Rapport 2003:3**

Online-versjon (pdf)

Utgivelsessted: Halden

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(E-post: [post-fa@hiof.no](mailto:post-fa@hiof.no))

Høgskolen i Østfold. Rapport 2003:3  
© Forfatteren/Høgskolen i Østfold  
ISBN: 82-7825-146-0  
ISSN: 1503-2612

## **Thanks**

We would like to thank our consultants for invaluable help and support throughout the various stages of the work:

Steve Bell, Scotland

Yvonne Andreasson and Bo Lundahl, Sweden

Michael Byram, England

Tor Atle H. Kleven, Norway

We would also like to thank our network partners for stimulating response. The friendly atmosphere in which our meetings took place was highly motivating and spurred us on to continue our work with even more determination. Besides, we have learnt a lot about language and culture which has contributed to raising *our* awareness as to the richness of diversity.

I believe in the fundamental value of multilingualism, as an amazing world resource which presents us with different perspectives and insights, and thus enables us to reach a more profound understanding of the nature of the human mind and spirit. In my ideal world, everyone would be at least bi-lingual.

(David Crystal in Preface to *English as a Global Language*)

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## 1.0 Introduction

In October 1997 the Spanish national Socrates office arranged a partner-finding seminar in Salamanca in order to motivate seminar participants to establish networks and to initiate project ideas related to the teaching of foreign languages in teacher training. One of these networks designed *Intercomprehension in Language Teacher Education (ILTE)*, a three-year project involving six partner institutions in six European countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Austria, England, and Norway, with the Portuguese institution as coordinator.

Norway was represented by Østfold University College, Faculty of Education, with a team consisting of two faculty teachers (one in English and one in pedagogy) and three mentors and school teachers (two in primary school and one in lower secondary school).

The Norwegian partner's motivation for participating in the network was among other things an ambition to establish links between new signals in the national curriculum guidelines for compulsory education and the notion of intercomprehension, as discussed and defined by the network.

The present report discusses how teacher training modules based on intercomprehension ideas have been developed. The report has a past and a future orientation: the past orientation has to do with several experiments in primary and lower secondary school designed to assess approaches and activities that address intercomprehension in the classroom, the future orientation has to do with the modules which have been devised as a consequence and which are currently being tested.

The ideas presented are meant to motivate teacher trainers and school teachers to think of the teaching of foreign languages in a broader perspective than what has traditionally been the case among most foreign language teachers. Hopefully this report will also initiate discussion of what it actually can mean to teach a foreign language. *From language teacher to teacher of languages* can thus be seen both as a slogan and as a goal for the ideas presented in this report.





## 2.0 The ILTE project – ideas, definition, aim

The foundation for *Intercomprehension in Language Teacher Education* from the Norwegian partner's point of view was the firm belief that when learning a foreign language, the mother tongue will be of great help and support, and so will any other linguistic and cultural knowledge, explicit or implicit. When learning the second foreign language, knowledge of the first foreign language - and the mother tongue - will support understanding of that new foreign language and facilitate acquisition of it. Language teachers should keep in mind the significance of having this capacity for understanding and learning languages and make use of it in the classroom. In a multi-linguistic and multi-cultural society this capacity may become increasingly important. In that perspective the question of how the language teacher of the future may differ from the language teacher of the past turned out to be one of the main aspects of the project.

It may be interesting to reflect on how the role of language learning has changed over the years. In the distant past the learning of languages was considered valuable in order to be able to read literature. In the more near past it was looked upon as an instrument to communicate with native speakers. At the present its major role is perhaps the possibilities offered for communicating with different people in the world at large. In all three cases, there is also the humanistic education purpose of creating an understanding of other cultures and peoples.

Another main aspect of the project was therefore the idea that European citizens ought to be motivated and educated to develop language skills in several languages in order to be able to understand and communicate with each other: plurilingualism, defined by the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* – a handbook for language teachers and other language professionals as:

the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw.  
(Council of Europe, 2001: 168)

Complete proficiency in a foreign language is not always necessary; in many situations and contexts partial proficiency will do, for example listening and reading skills. These skills are frequently referred to as the receptive skills of language learning, while speaking and writing skills are referred to as productive skills. Although it must be recognised that 'receptive' skills require energy and commitment on the part of the learner too, and in this sense are

active skills, as many teachers of foreign languages have experienced, it normally takes much longer to develop productive skills than it takes to develop receptive skills. In Norway, for example, there has been a tradition for good receptive skills. This could be a cultural feature, since many Norwegians want to feel confident that what they are going to say in a foreign language is correct. So, if Norwegians could be convinced that it is valuable (only) to *understand* the foreign language, they might be motivated to develop the receptive skills listening and reading in a number of languages. This might gradually lead to development of the productive skills speaking and writing.

There is much talk these days about 'European citizenship' in relation to language learning. For example, it is the European Union view, expressed in the White Paper, that there are two functions for language learning, first to create the means of benefiting from a single market:

Proficiency in several Community languages has become a precondition if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from the occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the border-free single market. This language proficiency must be backed up by the ability to adapt to working and living environments characterised by different cultures.

And, second, to create the means of interacting with other Europeans:

Languages are also the key to knowing other people. Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity, and of understanding between the citizens of Europe.

(European Commission, 1995: 67)

The White Paper then goes on to recommend that European citizens should master three languages, their own and two of the other official languages of the EU.

Does this notion refer to the idea that to benefit from belonging to the European community one needs languages? Or does it indicate that learning more languages creates European citizenship? Furthermore, when one talks of 'the new Europe' and 'the European dimension', could it be that one refers to all the languages spoken in Europe? If that is the case, the learning of neighbouring languages, i.e. nearness in terms of geography, or the learning of a lingua franca may no longer be as essential as it used to be. This could then, in the long run, mean that for example English will lose some of its status as a lingua franca. The global power of English may then be changed from having the role of a lingua franca to that of a language learnt to acquire basic skills in another foreign language, i.e. a platform onto which other foreign languages can more

easily be added.

Such reflections are the background for the way we have come to define *intercomprehension* as a tool with which to handle multilingualism in the future foreign language classroom: The future foreign language teacher will be the teacher of (several) languages rather than the teacher of (a) language; his/her role will be to develop languages skills rather than language skills and in the process develop the capacity for language learning at large.

Part of this picture is the role the mother tongue plays: the sense of learning languages starts from learning one's own language - this is where the foundation is laid for all languages learnt later in life, whether it is to a high proficiency level or to a lower partial-competence level. This is all the more the case when children grow up acquiring more than one language in their natural environment as is increasingly the case not only in the indigenous minorities, for example the Sami in Norway, but also among new immigrant minorities of refugees, economic migrants and asylum seekers. Interaction between mother tongue and foreign language teaching and learning can be a field where mother tongue and foreign language teachers meet, exchange ideas and experiences and plan common strategies for language learning development. Such strategies will in the end benefit the learner and his/her development as a learner of languages.

All this means that teachers' attitudes and pedagogical practices in the classroom may have to change from a fairly traditional (and narrow) view of what learning languages means to a broader view, where new purposes and new possibilities in the classroom are seen and developed. It also means that linguistic and cultural diversity shall be appreciated as a powerful factor, which will promote respect for and interest in a variety of languages and cultures.

*Intercomprehension in Language Teacher Education* has thus been a project aimed at broadening the sense of what learning/teaching languages *can* imply. On the one hand several languages rather than one language may be the topic in the foreign language classroom. This will not exclude one language, for example English in Norway, as a language more focussed on than any other foreign language. But in addition to focussing on one foreign language, the teacher will include features of other foreign languages as well, by exploiting the students' capacity for comprehending words, phrases and other linguistic and cultural elements in foreign languages at large. This is particularly the case where European languages are concerned, since the philological relationships among European languages allow learners to perceive links and similarities. Furthermore, it is a, perhaps regrettable, effect of colonialization that European languages are present in many parts of the world - Spanish in South America, French in Africa, Russian in Eastern Europe, as well as English almost everywhere - and this allows learners to use their European languages to communicate on a global level. This, we think, will enrich the learning atmosphere in the foreign language classroom both for teacher and students.

On the other hand we see language learning in a European as well as in a

global perspective because both European languages and other foreign languages spoken in Europe can play an important part in a more comprehensive language learning process. These two aspects are parts of the same picture because in addition to a linguistic dimension where the transfer of language skills and language knowledge is central, there will also be a cultural, social and political dimension that relates to the new socio-political European context. And as was stated above, this context will comprise not only existing European languages and cultures, but also include languages spoken in Europe today that have their linguistic and cultural roots elsewhere, this being the reverse of the coin of colonialization and economic dominance of the West.

### 3.0 ILTE and the Norwegian partner's national context

Even if the foundation for the project was an academic and pedagogic interest in the training of foreign language student teachers in several countries and with a comparative dimension, it was evident through all the different stages of the work that *intercomprehension* would mean different things in different national contexts. The individual national projects were therefore developed in relation to the different needs of the countries, but at the same time with a view to the common understanding that had brought the network members together and with a view to the common strands that crystallized as the project developed.

For the Norwegian team it was important - and necessary - to relate *intercomprehension* to the national curriculum guidelines for compulsory education and to the national guidelines for teacher education. Furthermore, it was essential for us to see the national context in relation to the context of European languages and cultures. And finally, since the concrete result of the project was the development of modules to be included in teacher training, it was of utmost importance for us to relate *intercomprehension* to the trainees' future work in the foreign language classroom.

Compulsory education in Norway (grades 1-10, ages 6-16) is organized and run according to national curriculum guidelines. Several revisions have been made over the last decades, the latest two revisions in 1987 and 1997. In relation to *intercomprehension*, the cultural dimension of language learning, the role of the mother tongue, and the idea of enhancing the pupils' overall language competence, implicit and explicit, are of particular interest and importance, and it is appropriate to consider first how these issues appear in the guidelines..

The 1987 guidelines were vague as regards the role of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom. They stated that the pupils' insight in and knowledge of their mother tongue should be exploited in the instruction of English, without underlining the value of this insight and knowledge. The role of the mother tongue as compared to that of the foreign language was presented in the traditional contrastive analysis and error analysis framework with emphasis on differences and interferences rather than on similarities and transfers. It could be argued that focus was on negative transfer of language rather than on positive transfer.

In the 1997 guidelines the notion of pupils' overall language competence is introduced:

The task of enhancing pupils' overall language competence is common to all the language courses. The aims and approaches of all the language syllabuses are therefore viewed as being interrelated. First language and foreign language teaching are thus based on a shared view of language, in which foreign language learning is not only viewed as skills training but also as an educational process, involving socialisation and the development

of language awareness and cultural awareness. The syllabus in English is based on the language-learning foundations laid when pupils learn their first language, on experience pupils have already gained through contact with other languages and cultures both at school and elsewhere, and on text competence which pupils have acquired through learning their first language.

(The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1999: 237)

Here, then, we see an explicit statement of conceptual and practical links between the foreign language (English) and the mother tongue. The question that remains to be answered, however, is how this link is actually practiced in school.

The 1997 guidelines also emphasize that good knowledge of languages is of utmost importance for successful contact, cooperation, and communication with people in Europe and the rest of the world. Learning foreign languages will facilitate communication with people in other countries and thus provide opportunities for becoming familiar with other cultures. Insight into and knowledge of other cultures will be a basis for respect and open-mindedness and lead to other ways of thinking. In this way the pupils' understanding of their own cultural roots will also increase and thus contribute to strengthening their identity.

Therefore the cultural dimension is strongly emphasized and viewed as an important element of all foreign language learning. This is very clear both in the overall philosophy of the guidelines and in their individual objectives. Language learning, as compared to the traditional, narrow view of learning a foreign language - learning its grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation - is also very much a question of learning the culture of the countries in which the foreign language is spoken. For example one of the objectives for 1<sup>st</sup> grade pupils is to ... 'start to learn about how children in English-speaking countries live.' (p. 240) Language and culture are inseparable aspects of language learning; language is not only structures and words; language is also culture and communication.

The national guidelines for general teacher education had to be revised as a consequence of the new guidelines for primary and lower secondary school. The revised guidelines took effect as of 1 August 1998. They are closely related to the curriculum guidelines for compulsory education. One important element in the revised guidelines is their strong emphasis on the cultural dimension of foreign language learning. Cultural awareness, social competence, and general educational competence are crucial key concepts. This parallels the focus on culture in the guidelines for primary and lower secondary school and stresses foreign language learning as the learning of linguistic structures, culture, and communication.

In today's Europe linguistic and cultural diversity is more prominent and

crucial to political and social development than ever before. New countries join the European Union in one way or other in a continuous process, and the need to communicate across linguistic and cultural barriers becomes more and more obvious and predominant.

In this process the national languages may establish a position both as a national and as an international means of communication. The major European languages, i.e. the languages most taught as foreign languages in school, will in the short run mean more to international communication than the less taught and less spoken languages, but also these languages will in the long run be in a position to contribute because of their participation in the European community.

The European Language Portfolio, a Council of Europe initiative in the European Year of Languages 2001, may turn out to be a very useful tool to promote all European languages. The various countries participating in this project develop their individual frameworks for their portfolios. In the French portfolio, for example, there is a section 'Mes contacts avec d'autres langues et d'autres cultures', which is a form the pupils can fill in to make a survey of their individual linguistic and cultural experiences. This seems to be an excellent idea to make pupils aware of the knowledge they already have. Such a survey may encourage them to develop and broaden this knowledge and better prepare them for increased contact with other languages and cultures. The English version *My Languages Portfolio*, which can be found on NACELL's website (<http://www.nacell.org.uk>), also includes several good ideas that can easily be adapted.

To sum up, the Norwegian curriculum guidelines for compulsory education and the national framework for the education of student teachers provide the basis for developing teacher training programmes for foreign languages that include the notion of *intercomprehension*. However, as outlined in 2.0, our vision of intercomprehension goes further: we would like to see a more comprehensive view of language education, including the first language, Norwegian, or Sami, or a migrant language, and the foreign language(s) - even classical languages where they exist. Our project deals above all with foreign languages, but we see it as a first step towards a more comprehensive view in the future. Today there is a place for mother tongues in the foreign language classroom, but this is not going as far as saying there is active cooperation in the teaching of the mother tongue and the foreign language(s), or in the teaching of one foreign language and another.

We see intercomprehension applied in education as wider, or more explicit, than what is stated in the guidelines: We see language learning – mother tongue and foreign languages – as a process that incorporates all prior knowledge of language, including skills and experiences, and paves the way for more language(s) to be learnt. The teacher's role will then be to understand the significance of this and apply it in the classroom. The teacher-to-be, the student teacher, needs to see and experience both the pupil's and the teacher's role, and

this is what we attempted to do when the modules were compiled, cf chapter 6.



## **4.0 Classroom experiments**

Before compiling the teacher training modules, it was important for us to consider the students' future careers as foreign language teachers and assess approaches and activities that would address intercomprehension in the foreign language classroom. To that end experiments were designed to find out how intercomprehension could be implemented in the classroom.

As outlined in 3.0 the role of the mother tongue and the cultural dimension of language learning are aspects that are highlighted in the national curriculum guidelines. Furthermore, the fact that the curriculum guidelines emphasize communication and text competence - both of which refer to oral as well as to written language - signals a holistic view of language learning. Therefore, when designing the classroom experiments, we wanted to apply methods that would promote a holistic approach.

We found it convenient to take the three educational stages of compulsory education in Norway as a starting-point: grades 1-4 (learners aged 6-10), grades 5-7 (learners aged 10-13), and grades 8-10 (learners aged 13-16). Experiments were thus designed for each of these three stages, with an emphasis on learners aged 6-10.

### **4.1 Young learners in L-97**

According to the curriculum guidelines, the education of young learners (grades 1-4) is to be based on activities that will create curiosity and the need to investigate. L-97 emphasizes fun and play as crucial factors in the learning situation, factors which will develop the learner's language, cognitive abilities and communicative competence and presumably encourage them affectively and develop their motivation. In a learning situation where fun and play is the basis for classroom activities, there will, according to the guidelines, be an educational atmosphere where on the one hand the child is stimulated and on the other an atmosphere where the playing child affects the learning situation, in other words a mutual and interactive relationship between the child and the learning situation.

Another important aspect in the curriculum guidelines is that topic-based and cross-curricular activities will promote the abilities of the learner and pave the way for the mastering of subject-matter and social relations.

For learners in grades 1-4 topic-based and cross-curricular education will be the major approach to learning. This organization will see to it that topics from several subjects are integrated in such a way as to focus on the individual subjects in turn. The guidelines suggest that 60 % of the school year for grades 1-4 should be organized according to this principle. A natural development will be to move gradually from a completely topic-based organization to a more subject-based organization, so that at the end of compulsory education (at the

age of 16) the organization is basically subject-based.

## **4.2 The active and autonomous learner**

With 6- and 7-year-olds we experimented with picture books and found that using such books was gratifying because it highly stimulated and motivated them.

When these pupils became 8-year-olds picture books were still used. In addition we wanted to experiment with a method that would explicitly focus on the active and autonomous learner. Since an overall objective in Norwegian education is to make use of methods that on the one hand aim at integrating various subjects and on the other aim at taking the pupil's own experience and what he/she can offer as a starting point, we wished to experiment with a holistic method that would cater for both these two major considerations.

The *storyline* method, developed by among others Steve Bell (cf. e.g. Bell 1995 and 1999) is cross-curricular in its character since it provides a structure for the teaching of integrated subject studies. It can be applied with focus on one or more subjects, for example foreign languages. The storyline method therefore meets the requirements of the curriculum guidelines as to cross-curricular and topic-based education. It furthermore meets the requirement that the learner is to be educated so as to take actively part in his/her own learning process and gradually learn to work independently and with his/her own resources as a basis for development; in other words the aim of the educational process is the active and autonomous learner.

According to the curriculum guidelines education is to build on and develop the resources the learner brings with him/her to school. This is exactly what the storyline method takes as a starting-point; it is the learner's image of the world around him/her that will be the basis for further development and learning.

Another crucial point is the concept of the active learner: the learner as the curious, inquiring, inquisitive, and investigating learner, thereby developing his/her problem-solving abilities. The storyline method caters for these things, because it has great potential for development of the competence to become active. The method aims at making the learner aware of problems, at being able to guess and hypothesize, at trying out the hypotheses and assess them according to certain criteria. This process gives the learner the basis for interpreting and understanding his/her experience. It also provides him/her with the basis for giving words and concepts to his/her image of the world around him.

## **4.3 Six- and seven-year olds**

Suitable picture books were chosen to accompany the various topics planned for the whole year. The very first book the six-year-olds met (some were actually

only five) was *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Lionni. It is a book that lends itself beautifully to topics like 'beginning school', 'family and friends', 'colours' - topics that are good topics to start the first school year with, and that can easily be integrated in a cross-curricular approach.

Some of the children knew the Norwegian version of this book from kindergarten and were thus familiar with the story. They very quickly picked up words like *blue*, *yellow*, *little*, *Mam*, *Dad*, *school*, most of which resemble the Norwegian equivalents (*blå*, *gul*, *liten*, *mamma*, *pappa*, *skole*). With *Dad* it may have been the context rather than phonetic similarity that made understanding easier, and with *yellow* it was probably more the pictures of the two little figures than anything else.

It did not seem to affect them that the teacher spoke English to them the whole time. Even if some of them did not say anything in English themselves – cf. Krashen's argument that there is a natural 'silent period' – they understood a lot and took the instructions the teacher gave them.

*The very hungry caterpillar* by Eric Carle was one of the other books used in the autumn term. Both *The very hungry caterpillar* and *Little Blue and Little Yellow* are suitable for beginners because of the many repetitions they offer. *The very hungry caterpillar* was also a book some of the children already knew from kindergarten. The table below shows the topics and books that were worked with in grades 1 and 2.

Grade	Topics	Books used
1	Beginning school Family and friends Colours  Animals Days of the week Food  Fairytale figures Farm animals Animals Food  Sea and shore Where animals sleep	Little Blue and Little Yellow (by Leo Lionni)  The very hungry caterpillar (by Eric Carle)  Each Peach Pear Plum (by Janet and Allan Ahlberg) Is anyone home? (by Ron Maris) The lady who loved animals (child's game)  Spot goes on holiday (by E. Hill) When I'm sleepy (by Jane Howard)
2	Hobby Fantasy and dreams Food Daily life Houses  Games Days of the week  Holiday Seaside  Friendship	Postman Pat (by John Cunliffe) Can't you sleep, little Bear (by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth) The tiger who came to tea (by Judith Kerr) Rose and Dorothy (by Roslyn Schwartz)  Winifred's new bed (by Lynn and Richard Howell)  Abigail at the beach (by Felix Pirani)  Rupert and the hazelnut (by Mike Trumble)

Some of the books were simply read through, others were used as a basis for several activities to stimulate spoken English. In the second grade books like

*Postman Pat* by John Cunliffe and *Can't you sleep, little Bear* by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth were worked with thoroughly.

Only in the second grade were the children gradually exposed to text. Familiar pictures from the books the teacher had read to them were glued in an A-4 notebook and single words copied. When choosing pictures and words to accompany them pupils would say for example *Jeg har valgt caterpillar (I have chosen caterpillar)*.

#### **4.4 Eight-year-olds**

The class teacher designed a teaching programme based on the storyline methodology. It was carried out in her class of 8-year-olds (third grade) over a period of four weeks. Since this method was relatively new to her and quite new to her pupils, she decided to use the pupils' mother tongue as the medium most of the time. The primary aim of the experiment was to pilot the method. This setting is an example of interaction, or active cooperation, between the mother tongue and the foreign language mentioned in the final paragraphs of chapter 3, the mother tongue offering a base for the foreign language.

The topic chosen was *Farmlife a hundred years ago*, a topic that highly motivated the pupils to dig out whatever knowledge they had about life on a farm in the olden days and to find out more about it.

The basic idea behind the storyline method is to create a story; the process includes both telling the story and making characters, building houses, streets, a village – whatever is needed to illustrate the story that the pupils, prompted by the teacher, make up. This means that arts and crafts is very much part of the process; at the end of it the pupils had built the old farm with all its buildings, and they had provided all the people inhabiting this farm and neighbouring farms, and the landscape surrounding the little village.

A very essential element in all this is of course the language used, to discuss how they want to make everything, what the characters look like and are like and what they say to each other. A lot of opinion was exchanged and a lot of creativity mobilized to make up dialogues and to move the story forward.

All sorts of sidetracks can be taken along the way, but it is essential that the teacher has a clear plan for the whole process and that she directs the progress of the story, among other things by posing relevant questions (key questions).

The primary aim of this experiment was, as mentioned above, to pilot the method. It proved to be very successful, because it activated all the pupils, and all of them had something to contribute with. They learnt a lot about life on a farm in former times, and, most important of all - with reference to our project – a lot of language was produced, both oral and written language.

An additional aim was to find out how the pupils would cope with the foreign language they had been learning since grade 1, English, as the medium.

Since the pupils were familiar with using English picture books, three English picture books on farm life and farm animals were used: *The Snow Lambs* by Debi Gliori, *The Mitten* by Jan Brett, and *Friska – the sheep that was too small* by Rob Lewis. On the basis of these books one chapter of the story *Farmlife a hundred years ago* was created.

In other words, the children were familiar with the genre of storytelling. They were also used to tackling linguistically tricky situations partly by using Norwegian words to make themselves understood, and partly by interpreting English words by means of words from their mother tongue. They had been encouraged to do so in grades 1 and 2, so this method was known to them.

When using Norwegian words, they would often pronounce these words with what they thought was an English pronunciation. They would for example use Norwegian *blåste* for the past tense of *blow*, and say "blouste". They might know the English word *blow*, but not the past tense *blew*, and since the Norwegian equivalent is a regular verb, their choice "blouste" was a very logical choice.

The word *monster* is a word that has almost acquired the status of a Norwegian word, so *monster* in an English text was very obvious to them. *Monster* may be so common these days that the Norwegian *uhyre* may be unknown to 8-year-olds. *Size* and *big* were examples of words that they had met in familiar contexts – in connection with clothes. These words presented no difficulty either.

With reference to the *ILTE* project, we wanted to find out to what extent the storyline method promoted intercomprehension in the process of learning a foreign language. The experiment proved to be successful in activating all the children and motivating them to contribute towards a common goal. The ultimate aim in the foreign language classroom is to learn language and to produce language, and in a setting where the process and the individual learner's contribution is the main focus of interest and attention, all sorts of resources that the learner possesses will be activated and brought to the surface.

In other words, what the experiment told us, is that the storyline method provides a truly holistic approach to learning. It challenges the whole scope of the learner's resources, and it motivates further learning and development. These factors are crucial in all learning, and particularly so when facing a foreign language and a foreign culture. Even if the experiment was designed primarily to pilot the method, we still had the opportunity to observe the processes going on in children when they mobilize their capacity to cope with creating a story in a foreign language.

Furthermore, the experiment supported our hypothesis that the genre of storytelling is a valuable and powerful tool when it comes to exploiting the learner's capacity for making use of his implicit and explicit knowledge of language.

This experiment was carried out with young learners in a third grade class.

We think, however, that *storyline* will be successful also with intermediate and advanced learners. Reports from for example the USA, Denmark and Sweden indicate that the method works the way it is meant to work.

The storyline method seemed to be particularly beneficial in the way it would take the young learner's particular luggage and needs into consideration, and in the way it helped create an atmosphere in the foreign language classroom that stimulated the individual learner's confidence.

The classroom experiments with young learners outlined in 4.3 and 4.4 strongly indicate that a fundamental prerequisite in foreign language acquisition is to make use of methods that challenge the whole scope of the pupil's resources. Using picture books in the foreign language has proved to be successful in capturing the pupil's interest and building up his motivation for learning. And if picture books are put in a wider framework, as was the case when such books were used to create a story (cf *Farmlife a hundred years ago*), increased interest and motivation seems to be the result. The storyline method was experimented with in order to employ a holistic approach to learning, and the result was convincing.

The method emphasizes meaning rather than form. However, there is no reason why the teacher should not focus on form from time to time. With the very young focus on form will have to be implicit rather than explicit, but as the pupils mature cognitively, explicit focus on form will gradually enter the picture.

#### **4.5 Young learners and intercomprehension**

The experiments carried out with young learners indicate that intercomprehension takes place on at least two levels.

First there is the linguistic level. Pupils recognize words and phrases as either identical with or similar to words and phrases they already know from their mother tongue (or from other sources). Examples are *Mam, school, sister, Little Blue* for *mamma, skole, søster, Lille Blå*. To produce language themselves, they may for example say things like: *Jeg har valgt caterpillar* for *I have chosen caterpillar*, or they may choose a Norwegian word and pronounce it with what they think is an English pronunciation: *blouste* (blåste) for *blew*. In this case they may well know the infinitive *blow*, but not the past tense *blew*.

Young learners will naturally compare with their native language – Norwegian – and make use of similarities they detect between Norwegian and English. The foreign language vocabulary they encounter will mostly be concretes, not abstracts, and this will assist them in their comparison and transfer of vocabulary. Since both Norwegian and English are Germanic languages, a great deal of common vocabulary will of course make the transfer easy. Even if young learners at the earliest stages only listen to and imitate English, and therefore meet unfamiliar pronunciation and intonation patterns,

they are very well able to cope, because the classroom activities are founded on fun and play and motivation is high. The fact that they tended to transfer an English (or what they thought was an English) pronunciation to Norwegian words, demonstrates that an unfamiliar sound pattern was no real obstacle.

Secondly there is the cultural level. Several fairytales, songs and games are found in many countries, and in countries like England and Norway which have so much in common, there is a lot of cultural heritage for pupils to identify with. Also common social structures – as shown by the ability to recognise *Dad* not phonetically but rather by recognising the same family structure – may be at work and should be included as a socio-cultural rather than as a cultural feature. This common frame of reference will presumably assist pupils – even young learners – in understanding elements of for example fairytales in other languages than English as well, for example German, and particularly so if the fairytale is supported by pictures. The experiment with 12-year-olds outlined in 4.6 illustrates that pictures meant much to the understanding of a German text to these learners, who knew no German.

The linguistic and cultural/socio-cultural levels mentioned above represent familiar aspects of language teaching and learning. In addition to these levels, we can add a third level: recognition of genre. Recognition of genre, as when telling a story, seems to support and enhance intercomprehension on the linguistic and cultural levels. Structural features in stories like sequencing and repetition seem to support linguistic and cultural recognition. From their previous experience of being told stories the six-, seven- and eight-year-olds in our experiments seemed to transfer their expectation that the picture books in English would tell a story. Another type of picture book, for example a child's encyclopedia, would surely not result in that type of expectation.

A similar supporting and enhancing effect seems to be present in recognition of theme. When a class works with a theme like for example 'family and friends' (cf comment above on social structures) in several subjects, this cross-curricular approach will benefit all subjects involved, in the sense that experience from one subject will facilitate acquisition of another. Learners seem to transfer experience from one subject to another in much the same way as they transfer experience and expectations when they meet an English picture book.

A definition of intercomprehension from the young learner's point of view which includes recognition of language, culture, genre, and theme, seems to cater for central factors at work in the young learners' foreign language classroom.

#### **4.6 Twelve-year-olds**

In addition to the experiment with young learners outlined above, an experiment with a group of intermediate learners was carried out. The idea was to introduce them to a text in a foreign language they did not know.



A teaching unit of one lesson (45 minutes) for four pupils in grade 7 (12-year-olds) was designed. The four pupils were introduced to two pages of a German text, *Dachsleben* by G. Nelson. None of them knew any German.

At the beginning of the lesson the teacher told the pupils that she was about to read a text in German to them and then read the text while the pupils listened. There was no other introduction. During this first reading the pupils understood nothing – they just smiled as if saying: Am I supposed to understand anything of this? This was rather surprising, because the four pupils were above average intellectually and more mature than their age (12) should suggest. The teacher had expected them to understand something.

The second time the text was read the pupils were told that the teacher was about to read it once more and they were asked to make an effort to understand, to listen for familiar words. This time they were encouraged to listen actively, while the first time they received no introductory encouragement, and consequently they were passive rather than active listeners.

The second time therefore, they listened carefully, and even if they still did not understand what it was about, they recognized some of the words. They could not remember any of these words, but one of the pupils suggested that maybe it was a story about a dog – in Norwegian there is a breed of dog called *dachs*, a loan-word from German.

The third time the teacher showed them a picture and pointed to it while she read. This time they understood much more. And the fourth (and final) time the text was read the pupils had the text in front of them. They were asked to underline words and phrases they could understand, and it turned out they had underlined quite a few words. They were able to understand the contents, and they could retell much of the story. Examples of underlined words and word sequences are *schönen Frühlingstag*, *Dachsvater*, *langen Wintermonate*, *geschlafen*, *graben*, *Schnee*, *blendet ihn das Sonnenlicht*, *untergegangen*, *nämlich eine ganze Dachs-Familie*, *wir*. It is interesting to notice that most of the underlined words and sequences of words were not single words, but collocations. This indicates that pupils listen for meaning through word combinations such as noun phrases and predicates, rather than meaning conveyed by single words. These twelve-year-olds were able to explicitly show this through their underlined passages.

In the end all four pupils understood the story, and asked for more lessons like this one. Pupils in grade 7 are to choose between German and French as their second foreign language in grade 8. These four pupils had already made their choices, and the one who had chosen French wished he had chosen German.

This group of pupils had been selected because of their general interest in school work. They were above average when it comes to intellectual capacity and level of knowledge. But since German is a language closely related both to Norwegian and English, it is likely that pupils who take less interest in school

work in general than these four pupils would also benefit from being exposed to a German text.

The theme of the book is animals and the environment, and the book therefore lends itself very well to topic-based and cross-curricular teaching, if one should wish to include this kind of teaching unit in a wider framework. *Storyline* would be a suitable method to apply; pupils could for example build on the story they had already read, or make up new stories – in simple German – with help from the teacher. A story based on *Dachsleben* could be made into a chapter of the story *Farmlife a hundred years ago*. In Norwegian school efforts are made to find themes and teaching materials that can be applied in different settings and on different levels.

#### **4.7 Twelve-year-olds and intercomprehension**

As with the very young learners described above, these 12-year-olds benefited from illustrations in order to understand the text. They furthermore were better able to understand when they were given the text to look at while the teacher read it. Even if German was totally unfamiliar to them, they could still detect words and phrases that they could compare with Norwegian and English, and thus use their knowledge of the mother tongue and the first foreign language to interpret a second foreign language. With increasing support in the four readings, the pupils were gradually able to comprehend more of what was going on, until they in the end understood so much that they ended up asking for more lessons of this kind.

Another aspect that would have been interesting to examine, is the pupils' own reflection on what they could understand with increasing support from the teacher. Twelve-year-olds, and particularly these twelve-year-olds, who were mature for their age and bright pupils, have reached a level of cognitive development where they would be in a position to reflect on their own performance – at least with some help from the teacher.

So, if we compare with the very young ones, recognition of language is definitely at work. The cultural element in this experiment one could claim is represented in the illustrations. On the other hand, illustrations are associated with picture books, so from that point of view, intercomprehension would be linked to recognition of genre. Since the story was about an animal often found on or near a farm, and since they had worked with the topic *Farmlife a hundred years ago*, it could be maintained that recognition of theme is also a factor here. This experiment with twelve-year-olds illustrates that the four intercomprehension factors discussed in 4.5 – recognition of language, culture, genre, and theme – will be operative and overlap to a smaller or larger degree, depending on how a lesson or a series of lessons is designed.

## 4.8 Fifteen-year-olds

To investigate how 13-16-year-olds (grades 8-10) could cope with a text in an unfamiliar language, an experiment involving 40 pupils in two 10th grade classes was conducted at a lower secondary school. The pupils were asked to make educated guesses with regard to cognates in an unfamiliar language based on their prior knowledge of their mother tongue and other languages. Since English is obligatory all through compulsory school and German a popular elective in lower secondary, a French text was chosen to represent the unfamiliar language. One pupil who had been brought up bilingually (Norwegian and French) was given a Spanish text. This pupil then had a cognate language to work with, but the rest of the group, who worked with the French text, had a more demanding task since their reference languages were all Germanic languages (Norwegian, English and German).

The pupils were given two tasks - to summarize an understanding of the text, and to focus on individual words and relate those to English and German, as well as to their native Norwegian. In other words, they were asked to make an attempt to recognize words in the French (Spanish) text which could be linguistically tied to English, German, and Norwegian, preferably as cognates. Since no oral exercise was involved, the pupils had to rely merely on what they could detect of familiar combinations pertaining to orthography. They were, however, encouraged to try to produce sounds as they were working, as an aid in decoding words.

The teacher who conducted the task was convinced that the assignment should not be a chore, but rather an incitement to similar exercises in the future. The idea was to put the textbook aside and allow the pupils simply to play around with vocabulary, its spelling and visual impressions.

The text was about the French province of La Provence, and was accompanied by a small map with drawings of various objects relating to certain areas of the province - be it a palm tree, a castle, a horse or a bottle of perfume. Even if such a picture would represent a bit of help in achieving correct results, one must also bear in mind that no pre-reading activity took place. In spite of this, the pupils on the whole managed to come up with fairly good interpretations of the text, some even with excellent ones. There were pupils who thought that certain words were very difficult to define, but then again, guessing was part of the strategy involved. By distinguishing words like *région*, *sud-est*, *fruits*, *soleil*, *température*, *moyenne*, *heures* and others, they were able to write down coherent sentences in Norwegian explaining important information about La Provence in general. In addition, judging from the listing of vocabulary in columns picked out from the text, it is safe to conclude that Norwegian pupils at this level can, with educated guesses, recognize cognates and even sound patterns in an unfamiliar language. Their knowledge then is based on one or two foreign languages (English and German) as well as their

native Norwegian. The table made by one of the pupils is shown below.

Fransk	Norsk	Engelsk
Règion	Region	Region
Sud	Syd	South
Fabrique	Fabrik	Factory
Parfums	Parfyme	Parfume
Kilos	Kilo	Kilo
Fleurs	Blomster	Flowers
D'essence	Essens	Essence
Produit	Product	Product
Fruits	Frukt	Fruits
Nougat	Nougat	Nougat
Soleil	Sol	Sun
Climat	Klima	Climate
Température	Temperatur	Temperature
Moyenne	Måned	Mounth
Heures	Timer	Houers
Est	Er	Is
Par	Per	Par

The same pupil made the following summary of the French text:

Jeg tror at teksten handler om en region i syd Frankrike. Der blir det meste av verdens parfyme lagd. Det står også om hvor mange kilo blomster man trenger til å lage en kilo essens med parfyme. Det kan også hende at det står om eksportartikler som frukt og nougat, altså sjokolade. Jeg tror også at det står nedover ett eller annet med at det er veldig mye sol der, altså mange soldager. Gjennomsnittstemperaturen i måneden ligger rundt 22 grader. Det står kanskje at det er ca 3000 timer med sol i året.

They were encouraged to make educated guesses, and this summary is very good, both in terms of content and the fact that the pupil is able to write a coherent summary. He/she makes use of phrases like *jeg tror – det kan også hende – jeg tror også – det står kanskje* (*I believe – it may also be – I also believe – it says perhaps*) in order to make his/her text coherent and to underline that this is guessing on his/her part.

Most of the summaries were much less comprehensive and to the point than the one quoted, and some of them were very brief, for example *Teksten er*

*om hva man dyrker hvor (The text is about what is grown where).*

Very few of the pupils compared with German words. The pupil whose table is quoted, listed *ist* in parentheses in the last but one line. Another pupil had arranged his/her words in four columns, one for French, English, Norwegian and German words respectively, but had listed only *ist* and *ein* as the German words he/she could think of and compare with.

This may be a coincidence, but it may also indicate that since there are many French words that are the same in English, it was felt to be easier to relate to English than to German. Words like *fleurs* and *heures* are very similar in English and very different in German (*Blumen, Stunden*). On the other hand, words like *fabrique, produit* and *climat* are the same in all four languages. So if German was simply forgotten as reference, or left out for other reasons is hard to say. In the experiment with 12-year-olds described in 4.6 where the unfamiliar language was German, the pupils used whatever knowledge they had from either Norwegian or English.

As mentioned above, the pupils were also encouraged to try to pronounce the words while they were working. One of the pupils commented on *sud-est*: *sud-est = sydøst, du hører det ... norsk (you can hear it ... Norwegian)*. This example gives little evidence, but still one can perhaps claim that both the spoken and the written word can be valuable sources for reference and comparison when unfamiliar languages are dealt with. The experiment with 12-year-olds indicated that spoken German also meant much to their understanding of the text. In the future one might consider to make more systematic use of this 'think-aloud technique'.

The following school year a follow-up experiment was decided on. This time the setting was somewhat different since it involved a 10th grade class as well as an 8th grade class. Consequently there would be an opportunity to make comparisons between the two grades. The text used this time differed from the one used in the previous experiment. But it was a text about French industry with pictures included, and the task given to the pupils was the same.

All in all, both classes did well, even if there were a few polysyllabic words which a great majority of the pupils missed completely. An argument in their favour may be the fact that the previous groups dealt with a simpler body of vocabulary in general (unwittingly to them, of course), since the reference map with its drawings depicted mainly agricultural products.

The most positive factor in the experiment was the fact that the pupils in the 8th grade class did very well compared with the pupils in the 10th grade. This, of course, can be seen as a mere coincidence. Nevertheless, the finding may also suggest that there is more challenging work of this kind to be done in the future; one may start this kind of classroom work earlier than with 15-year-olds, perhaps 13-year-olds will benefit a lot from the type of activity outlined above.

The teacher conducting the experiments summed them up in this way:

If we, the teachers of English as a foreign language, are to believe what some linguists claim, that a person's second language, like the first, develops globally, not linearly, and that a language is not learned as a jigsaw of tiny bits of mastered skills, but rather as an entire picture that is at first blurred and then gradually comes into focus, then I feel the study at Risum lower secondary school was worth while.

#### 4.9 Fifteen-year-olds and intercomprehension

The results of the experiment with 15-year-olds show that language transfer and language comparison was a heavy factor when decoding the French text. The illustration accompanying the text may have given certain clues as to cultural features associated with the region, but the main clues seem to have been the text itself. Therefore the language factor of intercomprehension seems to have been the crucial one in this experiment. At this level of education (grade 10) pupils are used to working with factual texts, so genre is at play here too. In addition, they have some knowledge of the specific genre of tourist guides to regions, which certainly also have been a help.

Pupils in grade 10 have developed their cognitive abilities to a fairly high level; therefore an activity where they are asked to make educated guesses about a text in an unfamiliar language can give good results. They have experienced learning two foreign languages, their ability to generalize is fairly good, and when the activity is presented not like a chore, but as a rest from the textbook and tasks associated with the syllabus, it can be motivating and stimulating and whet their curiosity.

The activity outlined in 4.8 can be compared to a translation activity, only here it was a question of finding cognates. The results from the follow-up experiment, however, indicate that the pupils were concerned with finding not only cognates, but also the corresponding word, the translation, in the other language(s). One pupil listed for example French *beauté*, English *beautiful*, German *schön*, Norwegian *skjønn*, another pupil French *automobil*, English *car*, German *Auto*, Norwegian *bil*. Still another example is French *informatique*, English *information*, German *Auskunft*, Norwegian *informasjon*. These examples illustrate eagerness to find words, not only cognates. This may indicate that translation used to promote comprehension of several languages may be a fruitful activity, or the other side of the coin: an activity where the same text in several languages is compared. Translation has over the years lost credibility as a useful activity in the classroom – who has not been exposed to the read-and-translate-one-by-one task and thereby lost interest in the foreign language? But translation could maybe gain new ground if applied in a more constructive way, as for example for comparing languages and discovering similarities and differences between them. The experiments carried out with 13-year-olds and 15-year-olds seem to indicate just that.

## **5.0 Intercomprehension – foreign language teaching – foreign language learning**

When the project first began, the following working definition of intercomprehension was formulated:

a broad approach to language teaching and language learning which embraces a positive view of linguistic and cultural diversity and which aims to motivate pupils to recognize and activate their explicit and implicit linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills in order to develop their general language competence

The definition includes both the teacher and his/her role as a motivator in the language classroom and the learner and his/her efforts to exploit his/her overall linguistic and cultural competence.

As the project progressed, and based on the findings in the classroom, awareness-raising was singled out as the most essential facet of intercomprehension. The development of language and culture awareness seems to be the major task both for the teacher and the pupil. For the pupil it seems to be a question of developing his/her awareness by recognizing certain intercomprehension factors, for the teacher a question of developing his/her abilities to motivate for recognition of these factors. In this way intercomprehension can be viewed differently depending on whether it is seen from the pupil's or the teacher's point of view. The student teacher needs to include both these angles in his/her language studies.

### **5.1 Intercomprehension and foreign language teaching**

It has until quite recently been an aim in foreign language instruction to motivate the learner to develop (near) native speaker competence. The concept of native speaker competence is, however, a diffuse concept. Kramsch (1998) raises the question 'Who is a native speaker?' and presents several approaches to illustrate it. She claims that ... 'the dichotomy between native versus non-native speakers has outlived its use' (p. 27) and concludes her discussion by stating

In our days of frequent border crossings, and of multilingual multicultural foreign language classrooms, it is appropriate to rethink the monolingual native speaker norm as the target of foreign language education. As we revisit the marked and unmarked forms of language usership, I propose that we make the intercultural speaker the unmarked form, the infinite of language use, and the monolingual monocultural speaker a slowly disappearing species or a nationalistic myth. (p. 30)

Byram and Risager (1999 : 153) also refer to the non-native speaker as an intercultural speaker and describe him/her as '...a person who is capable of perceiving and explaining cultural and linguistic differences, and of making use of this capability in communication'.

The intercultural speaker is seen from different angles: Kramsch does not specify that the speaker should be able to explicitly state any differences in language or culture, whereas Byram and Risager include such specification in their notion of the intercultural speaker. This difference could be an interesting issue to discuss from an academic point of view. However, from a practical point of view the notion of the intercultural speaker as a speaker who makes use of whatever implicit or explicit resources he/she can mobilize to understand and to communicate in a foreign language, is more fruitful and viable, and complements the Council of Europe notion of plurilingualism quoted in section 2.0 above. In the foreign language classroom it will be the task of the teacher to motivate pupils to make use of all their abilities in order to comprehend language, and gradually produce language. To do so the teacher's own language and culture awareness should have reached a level where he/she is able to explain differences, without necessarily using such explanations in class. But the pupil's position is one of developing such awareness, with the teacher's constructive feedback as a strong motivating factor.

## **5.2 Intercomprehension and foreign language learning**

The notion of the plurilingual intercultural speaker applied to the foreign language classroom makes sense if it includes the total range of abilities that a learner mobilizes. If we take this view, the learner can be characterized as an *intercultural* learner, for whom it may be an aim to develop *intercultural competence*.

How then, can the learner develop intercultural competence? And is the development of intercultural competence a desirable aim? Risager states that intercultural competence ... 'refers to and supplements the concept of communicative competence, and therefore includes a **skills** dimension'. (Risager 2000 : 161). Intercultural competence is furthermore associated with assessment criteria. The concept of cultural awareness, she suggests, may be a better term, since it is more general and non-technical, and caters for a wider set of interpretations.

If the notion of competence is closely associated with skills and assessment criteria, then this shift from 'competence' to 'awareness' to describe a wider range of factors in the language and culture teaching process is not only a useful shift, but offers also a better and more to the point way of labelling what actually seems to take place in the language classroom where intercomprehension ideas and methods govern the activities.



The experiments described in chapter 4 indicate that degree of recognition seems to be crucial when it comes to how much the individual pupil can transfer of insight, knowledge and skills from one language to another. Based on the classroom experiments we carried out, we found that it may be relevant and convenient to describe such degree of recognition in four areas: language, culture, genre, and theme.

Pupils recognize and identify words and phrases they can compare with words and phrases they know in their mother tongue or other languages. In primary school the mother tongue is the most important source of reference, but gradually, as experience and knowledge of other languages than the mother tongue increases, so will also the chances for making use of more languages than the native language.

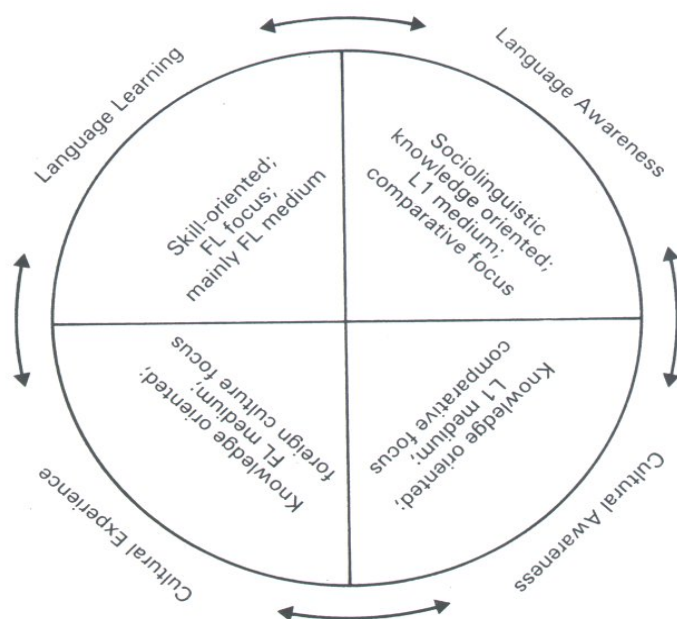
Many fairytales, songs and games represent a common European cultural heritage, and this common frame of reference makes it easier to understand various European languages. In section 4.5 the recognition of a socio-cultural rather than a cultural feature was mentioned. Learners, particularly young learners, will have implicit rather than explicit socio-cultural knowledge to draw on in many contexts. For example when working with a theme like ‘family and friends’ such implicit knowledge will be useful.

Genre can play an important part, in the sense that for example recognition of structural features like sequencing and repetition in for example fairytales and songs seem to strengthen recognition of language and culture.

Theme seems to have a similar positive and strengthening effect. By combining theme and cross-curricular activities, even more recognition and understanding will probably be the result.

These four aspects of recognition: language, culture, genre and theme represent a holistic approach to language learning. They also represent a methodology that on the one hand links language and culture, and on the other the individual’s experience and cognitive level of development to his/her linguistic and cultural learning process. The young learners need a high degree of recognition of specific examples or cases in all four areas, while more mature learners have the capacity for generalization and conscious comparison between languages.

The following figure illustrates the interrelationship between learning – awareness – experience – in the language and culture teaching process. It can also be seen as an illustration of the role of the teacher on the one hand and the role of the learner on the other. The two actors have a common goal: development of language and culture awareness. The learner will develop his/her awareness through recognition of one or more intercomprehension factors; the teacher will develop his/her awareness through motivating the learner to recognize them.



Byram, M. (1990: 20): Figure 2.1 *The language and culture teaching process*

At the end of the project period, therefore, intercomprehension was defined as

a broad approach to language teaching and language learning which embraces a positive view of linguistic and cultural diversity and which aims to motivate pupils to recognize and activate their explicit and implicit linguistic and cultural knowledge, skills, and experience in order to develop their general language and culture awareness.

This definition caters for awareness-raising, which we found was an essential element in the notion of intercomprehension, and also for the learner's prior knowledge, skills, and experience as a decisive factor in the process of learning foreign languages.

## 6.0 The modules

As pointed out in the introduction, this report has a past and a future orientation. Our experiments showed us that with the help of interested teachers, intercomprehension could be introduced into the classroom whatever the age of the pupils. Not all teachers are however willing to take these kinds of risks and experiment. Our next task was therefore to consider the ways in which teachers in training could be introduced to the concepts and methods involved.

To introduce *intercomprehension* in teacher training programmes for pre-service and in-service students of English at Østfold University College, modules were designed that address *intercomprehension* from various angles. Both theoretical and practical aspects were considered. On the one hand student teachers need to study theoretical aspects of foreign language learning to acquire a platform for knowledge and reflection. On the other they need to do several activities to better understand what they are reading about. Therefore the modules include both study material and activities.

It was, however, equally important to consider the students' future careers as foreign language teachers and assess approaches and activities that could be useful in the foreign language classroom. Therefore some modules were designed that would explicitly prepare them for work in the foreign language classroom. As described in chapter 4, during the project period several experiments were carried out in primary and secondary school to find classroom approaches and activities that could actually work. Some of these were piloted with student teachers, as were some of the other module elements.

Some issues are listed under more than one module. The reason for this is that there are not always clear-cut boundaries between modules; they will overlap to a certain extent. Besides, since the modules are currently piloted with students to see what works and what does not, some study material and activities will be taken out and others added in a continuous process.

When compiling the materials, the idea was to include a range of materials so that teacher trainers and school teachers who might be interested in using some of it can pick and choose according to their own needs and compose modules accordingly. Therefore no time schedule is suggested for the individual modules.

### **Module 1: *Language learning***

#### Study material:

Harmer, J. (1991): 'Why do people learn languages' pp. 1-10 in *The Practice of Language Teaching*, Harlow: Longman

Lightbown, P. M. and Spada, N. (1999): 'Theoretical approaches to explaining second language learning' pp. 31-48 in *How Languages are*

- Learned*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Harmer, J. (1991): 'What a native speaker knows' pp. 11-20 in *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Harlow: Longman
- Kramsch, C. (1998): 'The privilege of the intercultural speaker' pp. 16-31 in Byram, M. and Fleming, M. (eds.): *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (also listed under *The intercultural learner*)
- Graddol, D. (1999): 'The decline of the native speaker' pp. 57-68 in Graddol, D. And Meinhof, U. H. (eds.): *English in a changing world*, AILA Review 13 (also listed under *The intercultural learner*)
- Medgyes, P. (2000): 'Native speaker' pp. 436-438 in Byram, M. (ed) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*, London: Routledge

### Activities:

- Why am I learning foreign languages
- Design a questionnaire and interview a fellow student.
- Learner language profiles and identities
- An experiment in *Intercomprehension*
- A brief questionnaire
- What is *Intercomprehension*?
- Put jumbled-up lines in a poem in correct order (also listed under *Language awareness*)
- Decode syntactically correct text with nonsense words inserted (also listed under *Language awareness*)

## **Module 2: *Language awareness***

### Study material:

- Baker, C. and Jones, S. P. (eds.) (1998): 'Language awareness: Knowledge about language' pp. 628-632 in *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Lightbown, P. M. and Spada, N. (1999): 'Learner Language' pp. 71-90 in *How Languages are Learned*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Garrett, P. and James, C. (2000): 'Language awareness' pp. 330-333 in Byram, M. (ed) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge.

### Activities:

- Put jumbled-up lines in a poem in correct order (also listed under *Language learning*)

- Decode syntactically correct text with nonsense words inserted (also listed under *Language learning*)
- Study 'Jabberwocky' by Lewis Carroll
- Write a story in the mother tongue, and analyze its structural components
- The Great Toy Robbery – the way two interlanguages differ (pp. 74-75 in Lightbown, P. M. and Spada, N. (1999): *How Languages are Learned*, Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Look at language aptitude tests to see what these are trying to identify cf Byram, M. (2000): 'Aptitude for language learning' pp. 37-38 in Byram, M. (ed) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge

### **Module 3: *The European dimension***

#### Study material:

- Risager, K. (1998): 'Language teaching and the process of European integration' pp. 242- 254 in Byram, M. and Fleming, M. (eds.): *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Frühau, G. (1996): 'Introduction' pp. 7-11 in Frühau, G., Coyle, D. and Christ, I. (eds.): *Teaching content in a foreign language - practice and perspectives in European bilingual Education*, Alkmaar: European Platform for Dutch Education
- Stevenson, V. (1983): Foreword (by Philip Howard) and Introduction in *The world of words*  
*An illustrated history of western languages*, New York: Sterling

#### Activities:

- The Indo-European mother tongue
- Identification of some European languages

### **Module 4: *Language and culture***

#### Study material:

- Kramsch, C. (1993): 'Introduction' pp. 1-14 in *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Byram, M. (1990): 'Teaching Culture and Language: Towards an Integrated Model' pp. 17-30 in Buttjes, D. and Byram, M. (eds.): *Mediating Languages and Cultures*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Keller, G. (1990): 'Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication: Effects of German-British Pupil Exchanges' pp. 120-135 in Buttjes, D. and Byram,

- M. (eds.): *Mediating Languages and Cultures*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Risager, K. (2000): 'Cultural awareness' pp. 159-162 in Byram, M. (ed) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge

### Activities:

- Advertisements and *Intercomprehension*
- Advertisements and stereotypes
- Textbook studies: How are other cultures portrayed in the various textbooks used in school, and how could these textbooks be improved?
- Several activities offered in Seelye, H. Ned (1993): *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company
- Study 'The cultural dimension in the curriculum' pp. 100-105 in Byram, M. and Risager, K. (1999): *Language Teachers, Politics and Cultures*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters  
as a point of departure for discussion

### **Module 5: *The intercultural learner***

#### Study material:

- Kramsch, C. (1998): 'The privilege of the intercultural speaker' pp. 16-31 in Byram, M. and Fleming, M. (eds.): *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (also listed under *Language learning*)
- Graddol, D. (1999): 'The decline of the native speaker' pp. 57-68 in Graddol, D. And Meinhof, U. H. (eds.): *English in a changing world*, AILA Review 13 (also listed under *Language learning*)
- Guterson, D. (1999): *East of the Mountains*, pp. 231-245 (paperback edition 2000), London: Bloomsbury
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- Seelye, H. Ned (1993): 'Cultural context, the key to comprehension' ch. 1 in *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company
- Hoffman, E. (1989): *Lost in Translation* (an autobiography), London: Random House

### Activities:

- Several activities offered in Seelye, H. Ned (1993): *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, Lincolnwood: National Textbook Company
- Several good activities offered in Fennes, H. and Hapgood, K. (1997): *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom*, London: Cassell

### **Module 6: *Young learners and intercomprehension – analysis and suggestions for language and cultural awareness-raising***

#### Study material:

Ulseth, B. et al (2002): Sections 4.1 – 4.5 in the present report  
Lund, R. (1999): 'Storyline og fremmedspråk' pp. 195-212 in Eik, L. T. (ed.): *Storyline*, Oslo: Tano Aschehoug (also listed under *Intermediate and advanced learners and intercomprehension*)

### Activities:

- Using picture books known from Norwegian, for example *The very hungry Caterpillar* (*Lille larven aldri mett*) and *Postman Pat*
- Using fairytales known from Norwegian, for example *Goldilocks* and *Little Red Ridinghood*
- Game: *Happy Families* – using cards with everyday words from for example English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, (for example mother - mamma – mãe - madre)
- Using picture books with German text

### **Module 7: *Intermediate and advanced learners and intercomprehension – analysis and suggestions for language and cultural awareness-raising***

#### Study material:

Ulseth, B. et al (2002): Sections 4.6 – 4.9 in the present report  
Lund, R. (1999): 'Storyline og fremmedspråk' pp. 195-212 in Eik, L. T. (ed.): *Storyline*, Oslo: Tano Aschehoug (also listed under *Young learners and intercomprehension*)  
Gulbrandsen, K. (2001): 'Den europeiske språkmappa' pp. 4-9 in *Språk og språkundervisning* nr 2/2001, Oslo: Landslaget Moderne Språk

### Activities:

- Identification of some European languages
- Relate a text in French/Spanish to words and phrases you recognize from other languages, including Norwegian, and try to summarize it. (for a learner who does not know French/Spanish)
- Several good activities in *The Languages Book* written and compiled by Mike Raleigh, published by ILEA English Centre, London 1981
- Go to the following site to collect ideas for your own *My Languages Portfolio*:

<http://www.nacell.org.uk/resources>



## 7.0 Activities - some examples

In the following, examples are given to illustrate activities included in the various modules. As pointed out above, this part of the project is still experimental and developing out of the experiments in classrooms. Our aim is to offer a range of activities and ideas for teacher trainers and school teachers to use in their own curriculum development and course design.

### Module 1:

#### Activity: Learner language profiles and identities

Students are given a silhouette of a human being drawn on a piece of paper and colour it in to represent the languages they speak/understand and in which parts of the body they feel their languages reside.

AND/OR pieces of paper with the names of different languages known/expected to be present in the students are placed in different parts of a room and students are asked to stand next to or between the languages they feel they 'belong' to and then explain their choice of location.

#### Activity: An experiment in Intercomprehension

(It is presumed that the students do not know Spanish, i.e. they have not learnt Spanish at school or studied it at university)

Un hombre estuvo ingresado durante 28 años en diversos manicomios de Estados Unidos o, mejor dicho en hospitales psiquiátricos. En el primer manicomio donde ingresó, en 1951, lo declararon disminuido mental, dado que no sabía siquiera hablar y se limitaba a producir sonidos extraños que no tenían nada que ver con el lenguaje humano. A lo largo de los años y de los sucesivos hospitales a donde lo trasladaban, los médicos lo juzgaron 'muy poco comunicativo', 'muy retrasado' como un 'individuo con un lenguaje incoherente'.

1. Make a brief summary of the text.
2. Identify the elements which helped you to interpret the text.
3. List the strategies used. Take into consideration *all* your knowledge and experience, both linguistic clues and whatever you know about modern societies which helped you to guess the meaning of the text.

#### Follow-up activity: What is Intercomprehension?

1. Make a list of key-words/concepts that you associate with *Intercomprehension*.

2. Attempt to define *Intercomprehension*.
3. Identify skills and capacities that support *Intercomprehension*.

## **Module 2:**

### **Activity: Decoding of text**

- a) Answer the questions below.
- b) Then explain why you were able to answer them.
- c) And finally: analyze the text in terms of structures and vocabulary.

### **The Ackles Broch Quassed**

Gimp and Moopy were ackles. One trafen Gimp and Moopy were broching quassed. Moopy poated one of Gimp's frapers because il couldn't scrop ils. Gimp powed 'Comp ap my fraper!' But Moopy wouldn't comp ho to ilt. So Gimp sworched Moopy, and the ackles conbreted to squit. Then, Armp deperted into slep. Il taupled both of the ackles, and luped em off to edsen.

- What were Gimp and Moopy?
- Why did Moopy poat one of Gimp's frapers?
- Why did Gimp sworch Moopy?

(from Hood & Solomon 1985 : 99-100)

### **Follow-up activity:**

Discuss the arbitrariness of the sign and the need for consensus on the meanings of arbitrary signs, cf. the various alphabets.

### **Activity: Jumbled-up poem**

Here is a poem with twelve lines. All the lines have been jumbled up. Try to reorder them into a complete poem. The title of the poem is 'maggie and milly and mollie and may' and the poet is e. e. cummings ( from Lazar 1993 : 94)

and molly was chased by a horrible thing  
 so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and  
 went down to the beach (to play one day)  
 may came home with a smooth round stone  
 which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and  
 it's always ourselves we find in the sea  
 maggie and milly and molly and may

and maggie discovered a shell that sang  
milly befriended a stranded star  
For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)  
as small as a world and as large as alone  
whose rays five languid fingers were;

Which devices did you make use of to reorder the poem?  
Could this task be easier for you as a Norwegian than for someone who has no concept of 'beach' or 'sea' – for example someone from central Europe who has never seen the sea?

### **Module 3:**

#### **Activity: Identification of some European languages**

Which of the languages below can you identify?  
Which clues will you make use of?

<p><b>INTRODUKTION TIL DET EUROPÆISKE SPROGÅR 2001</b>  Det glæder os meget, at Europarådet og Den Europæiske Union er gået sammen om at afholde Det Europæiske Sprogår 2001.</p> <p><b>DAS EUROPÄISCHE JAHR DER SPRACHEN 2001 – EINFÜHRUNG</b>  Wir freuen uns sehr, dass das Europäische Jahr der Sprachen 2001 vom Europarat und der Europäischen Union gemeinsam veranstaltet wird.</p> <p><b>INTRODUCING THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF LANGUAGES 2001</b>  We are delighted that the Council of Europe and the European Union have joined forces to organise the European Year of Languages 2001.</p> <p><b>INTRODUCTION - L'ANNÉE EUROPÉENNE DES LANGUES 2001</b>  Nous sommes heureux que le Conseil de l'Europe et l'Union Européenne aient uni leurs forces pour organiser l'Année Européenne des Langues 2001.</p> <p><b>PRESENTAZIONE DELL'ANNO EUROPEO DELLE LINGUE 2001</b>  Siamo lieti che il Consiglio d'Europa e l'Unione Europea abbiano unito le proprie forze per organizzare l'Anno europeo delle lingue.</p> <p><b>TEN GELEIDE: HET EUROPEES JAAR VAN DE TALEN 2001</b>  Wij zijn verheugd dat de Raad van Europa en de Europese Unie de</p>	<p>handen ineen hebben geslagen om het Europees Jaar van de talen 2001 te organiseren.</p> <p><b>APRESENTAÇÃO DE 2001, ANO EUROPEU DAS LÍNGUAS</b>  Congratulamo-nos com o facto de o Conselho da Europa e a União Europeia terem unido os seus esforços para organizar o Ano Europeu das Línguas 2001.</p> <p><b>EUROOPAN KIELTEN TEEMAVUOSI 2001</b>  Olemme erittäin tyytyväisiä, että Euroopan neuvosto ja Euroopan unioni ovat yhdistäneet voimansa organisoidakseen Euroopan kielten teemavuoden 2001.</p> <p><b>INTRODUKTION TILL EUROPEISKA ÅRET FÖR SPRÅK 2001</b>  Vi glädjer oss åt att Europarådet och Europeiska unionen tillsammans anordnar Europeiska året för språk 2001.</p> <p><b>INTRODUCCIÓN DEL AÑO EUROPEO DE LAS LENGUAS 2001</b>  Nos felicitamos de que el Consejo de Europa y la Unión Europea hayan aunado esfuerzos para organizar el Año Europeo de las Lenguas 2001.</p> <p><b>ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟΥ ΕΤΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΓΛΩΣΣΩΝ 2001</b>  Είναι μεγάλη μας χαρά που το Συμβούλιο της Ευρώπης και η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση  ένωσαν τις δυνάμεις τους για τον εορτασμό του Ευρωπαϊκού  Έτους των Γλωσσών  2001.</p>
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## **Module 4:**

### **Activity: The cultural dimension in the curriculum**

Study 'The cultural dimension in the curriculum' by Michael Byram and Karen Risager (1999), an extract from discussions with Danish and English teachers of foreign languages and their beliefs about why they teach languages - as a stimulus for discussion.

### **Activity: Textbook analysis**

Take a textbook for teaching a language you do not know or know very little and 'read' the textbook to see what you can find out about the country/ies portrayed there - putting aside everything you already know about the country. Ask yourself what kind of families live in this textbook country, what kind of leisure or work they have, how they meet and greet each other and any other habits, customs and cultural behaviours and beliefs you can get from the text (and only from the text - put aside your stereotypes!).

## **Module 6:**

### **Activity: Happy Families**

The following table of English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish words can be used to prepare cards in order to play Happy Families:

<b>English</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
Mother	Mamma	Mãe	Madre
Father	Papa	Pai	Padre
Sister	Sorella	Irmã	Hermana
Brother	Fratello	Irmão	Hermano
Grandmother	Nonna	Avó	Abuela
Grandfather	Nonno	Avô	Abuelo
White	Bianco	Branco	Blanco
Black	Nero	Preto	Negro
Blue	Blu	Azul	Azul
Red	Rosso	Vermelho	Rojo
Green	Verde	Verde	Verde

Each card could – as a first approach – include the other three words as well, for example

<b>mother</b>	<b>mamma</b>	<b>mãe</b>	<b>madre</b>
<b>mamma</b>	<b>mãe</b>	<b>madre</b>	<b>mother</b>
<b>mãe</b>	<b>madre</b>	<b>mother</b>	<b>mamma</b>
<b>madre</b>	<b>mother</b>	<b>mamma</b>	<b>mãe</b>

## Module 7:

### Activity: Identification of some European languages

See Module 3

### Activity: My Languages Portfolio

From the site of My Languages Portfolio

<http://www.nacell.org.uk/resources>

some of the entries could be used, for example:

I have friends who come from these countries and speak these languages

.....  
.....  
.....

In the future I would like to go to

.....  
.....  
.....

and I would like to learn these language(s)

.....  
.....  
.....

The form provided on the above site can easily be adapted to suit your needs.





## 8.0 Conclusion

It may be claimed that intercomprehension is nothing new and that it has existed as long as humans have felt the need to understand and be understood in communication exchanges with other humans speaking another language than themselves. It may furthermore be claimed that intercomprehension is not a new phenomenon in the classroom: Pupils striving to learn a foreign language have always used whatever resources they had to overcome difficulties when dealing with the foreign language. However, what perhaps is a new idea, is that of mobilizing one's general language and cultural knowledge, skills, and experience in a more systematic way than before, by being encouraged by a teacher who acknowledges the significance of this capacity.

Through experiments carried out with 12-year-old pupils dealing with a German text, 15-year-olds working with a French text, and student teachers working with a Spanish text, none of whom knew German, French, and Spanish respectively, we saw that these learners were fully capable of dealing with languages they supposedly did not know. They mobilized their complete range of resources and were able to decode the unknown language on the basis of various clues: clues that we have argued for and labelled 'language', 'culture', 'genre' and 'topic'.

It is this capacity we think can be developed in the foreign language classroom by working systematically with enhancing the learner's language and culture awareness. We showed this by working with teachers willing to experiment and take risks and we learnt from these experiments some of the elements which need to be included in a course of training for teachers. For a student teacher it is vital to develop both his/her own awareness and to be able to motivate and stimulate his/her future pupils to build up their linguistic and cultural awareness. Outside the classroom such awareness-raising will be valuable in order to meet different nationalities and to function in a society where plurilingualism will gradually become an increasingly essential feature inside and outside Europe.



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## 10.0 Further reading

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Høgskolen i Østfold

## HØGSKOLEN I ØSTFOLD. RAPPORT

### 1995

1995:1

Salthe, Gunnar:

*Hensikter og prinsipper i omsorgen for mennesker med psykisk utviklingshemming.*

ISBN 82-7825-000-6

1995:2

Haaland, Frode H.:

*Lederutvikling - læring uten handling. Evaluering av "Program for lederutvikling" i Østfold Fylkeskommune.*

ISBN 82-7825-001-4

1995:3

Dybvik, Kjell-Arne:

*Psykisk utviklingshemmedes muligheter og begrensninger for sosial integrasjon i nærmiljøet sett på bakgrunn av ansvars-reformens intensjoner.*

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1995:4

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ISBN 82-7825-006-5

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*Saks kunnskap, forståelse eller problematisert forståelse? Veiledning som del av et lederutviklingsprogram.*

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### 1996

1996:1

Billeau, Jacky:

*Typologie comparée des migrations de fonction. Regards sur culture d'accueil. Enquête auprès des personnels d'entreprises français en Norvège et norvégiens en France.*

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- 1996:3** Ramsdal, Helge:  
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*Aldersblanding i skolen. Evaluering av aldersblanding som organiseringsmåte ved Kambo skole i Moss.*  
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*Aldersblanding ved Steinberg skole. Evaluering av et skoleutviklingsprosjekt.*  
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- 1997:2** Fjellvang, Tormod:  
*Klasser, lagdeling, konsekvenser.*  
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- 1997:3** Stene, Fridtjov:  
*Interesse for idrett. Tanker og opplevelser blant skoleungdom.*  
ISBN 82-7825-033-2
- 1997:4** Nilsson, Thorbjørn:  
*Søkelys på lokaldemokratiet. Noen organisasjonsformer i skandinaviske kommuner.*  
Av Thorbjørn Nilsson, Geir Conrad Tufte og Lars Zanderin.  
ISBN 82-7825-034-0
- 1997:5/Part1** Fryberger, David:  
*A model for ball lightning.*  
*Part 1 of the proceedings from the "First international workshop on the unidentified atmospheric light phenomena in Hessdalen"*  
ISBN 82-7825-035-9



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